

## UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

### SOUTHWEST CENTER FOR PRE-EVENT MESSAGING

#### SECONDARY ANALYSIS RESULTS

##### CHEMICAL AGENTS

###### American Indian

###### Language:

The sample was derived from Oklahoma American Indians (AIs). Although Oklahoma is in the top three states for AI population (depending on survey definitions), there is only one Federally recognized reservation: the Osage. All other tribal lands designated during Indian Territory days were legislatively changed after the discovery of oil and the change from "Territory" status to statehood. Today, Oklahoma AIs live on land that is now co-mapped as tribal land and State of Oklahoma land.

One result of the above political history is that nearly all Oklahoma AIs are fluent in English or speak only English. Some elder people are fluent in the native language only, but monolinguals are least common.

###### Education:

Education levels, as indicated by years of formal schooling, are difficult to equate to general American educational indicators because of the older generation's experience with boarding schools and inferior rural schools. However, today, AIs of Oklahoma attend public schools in a variety of community sizes.

###### SES:

The sample was predominately from people with lower SES indicators. This is common to populations that are minority or, as with AIs, have experienced sociocultural disintegration in their home land.

###### Cultural Factors versus Rural Factors:

Unique life ways among AIs exist as a function of the many tribal cultures extant in North America. However, AIs have adapted to contemporary life with a multicultural capacity. The tribal-specific traditions have a public "face," and a private "face" that is not for perusal by outsiders. Otherwise, in public situations

(e.g., work, school, civic matters, etc.), there may be little to distinguish the AI person from non-Indian people.

Of more importance here are the adaptations to rural life that are made by AIs. Low population density is generally associated with less economic resources in communities. Yet, not all rural adaptations are economically based. For example, hospitals in rural communities may be smaller and have less technical capability, but have improved access to care compared to larger urban medical centers. This may be in part due to family/friend relationships with staff of the hospital. Combined with less “user-pressure,” the user experiences the hospital as a familiar, friendly, and accessible resource in the community, in spite of its limit to basic care.

#### Cultural Theme:

AI people express an ethic of being survivors. One tribe has as its motto: “The Unconquered and Unconquerable [tribe].” While physical survival is still a problem for some with very limited resources, most of the tribal entities are today fixated on economic development as a means of self-destiny in the presence of American society.

There is also a greater sense of “personalism” expected and given than in the general anonymous metropolises of urban America. This is a broad issue that cross-cuts much of human interaction whether mundane or of a crises nature.

#### Tribal Reliance:

In a crisis, some the larger tribes have experienced the mobilization of all tribal resources (e.g., tribal police, tribal fire departments, tribal health care workers) to meet a challenge effectively. Moreover, the Chief is expected to be in the field with the other workers to effectively be a part of the effort.

#### Sweat Lodges:

The use of sweat lodges for ritual purification was noted as one tactic to use to cleanse the body of toxins, including chemical agents. The specification was to build the lodge on a high hill. This does not mean that other antidotes would be excluded, but that sweat lodges would be done as well.

#### Survivalist Skills:

Living in rural areas, particularly those that are very remote, produce an ability to rely on one’s own knowledge, skills, and resources. Contemporary technology is very definitely used, but can fail. For example, gas powered electric generators are common and well used. However, when the gas runs out or the motor fails,

the manual axe needs to be present, its proper and efficient use must be known, and ways to find the driest wood for fire-building must be a part of a skill-set.

#### Types of Rural Communities:

While many technical definitions of “rural” exist, the practical concern here is two types of population densities. One type of rural life exists in small to medium towns that are located 50-100 miles from a larger population base. These small towns have TV cable, Web access, hospitals, clinics, grocery stores, and other common resources, albeit on a much smaller scale than larger metropolitan areas. However, another type of rural life exists that is characterized by very widely dispersed living patterns without the above noted resources available in small towns. In Oklahoma, the remote living pattern is not only a function of food growing which requires large expanses of land for production, but on the history of Indian Territory policies. Small parcels of land were assigned to AI people without regard to location to resources (natural or human). Today, many AI people still live on these assigned lands which may not have been located near towns. Consequently, they are, in some cases, nearly isolated. Tribal authorities keep track of these locations for crisis purposes.

#### Communications:

“Personalism” is a major theme related to all interactions. Communications from those that are known and local are more highly valued than those that are far removed from the tribal and/or rural life experience. The web of communications for AI rural people will include tribal authorities and non-tribal authorities. It will include TV, but due to limited availability of signal, reception quality, cable/no cable, satellite/no satellite, radio is more highly used. Cell phones are unreliable because of signal limitations in rural areas.

#### Information dissemination:

Placement of information is best accomplished in the work settings, tribal clinics/hospital, local grocery stores, and particularly, remote non-chain convenience stores that are found in rural areas.

#### Generational:

Elder cohorts are reported to be more likely to have canned food and such supplies that younger people. Also, their survival skills may be higher due to earlier hardships not so common today.